COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

(Greater Toronto Branch)

The Community Planning Association of Canada, which for organizational purposes is divided into provincial divisions and municipal branches, was organized in Ottawa in 1946. The aim of the Association is to foster public understanding of, and participation in, community planning in Canada.

The Greater Toronto Branch of the Community Planning Association, founded in 1948, is one of its most active units. The nucleus of the branch consisted of former members of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association. This Association was organized in 1944 in Toronto at a Conference convened by the Toronto Citizens' Forum to discuss all phases of the housing problem in this city. It was obvious to those present at the Conference that one of the greatest needs in the housing field, was the provision of decent low-rental housing for those who could not afford to pay an economic rent.

The Citizens' Housing and Planning Association undertook as one of its major responsibilities, to spearhead the movement for the redevelopment of substandard housing areas. For several years it had been recognized that the area most in need of redevelopment was that known as Regent Park. In 1934, the Lieutenant Governor's Committee investigating housing conditions in Toronto made an analysis of the Regent Park area and recommended that any redevelopment programme in Toronto should begin there. The City of Toronto Advisory Planning Board in 1943 also recommended Regent Park as a redevelopment area.

During the four years of its existence, the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association presented several briefs to the Mayor and council of the City of Toronto and federal authorities urging the commencement of a housing redevelopment plan for Toronto. Conferences were held; a continuous flow of letters were written; and news releases given the press. Aspirants for public office were contacted and asked to state their stand on publicly-subsidized housing.

In the civic elections of 1947, the ratepayers of Toronto were asked to approve an estimated expenditure of $ 5,900,000. for the Regent Park Project. The Citizens' Housing and Planning Association arranged for radio broadcasts and meetings and distributed thousands of explanatory pamphlets. These efforts and those of other public-spirited bodies, together with the lead given by the Mayor and other civic officials, resulted in a substantial majority vote of the property-owners in favour of proceeding with the project.

Today you will be seeing, in a partially completed state, the first public housing project in Canada in which all levels of government; federal, provincial and municipal, are participating. The pattern set may well have established a working relationship among the three levels of Government which will do much to improve the housing situation throughout the country for those in the low-income brackets. The Community Planning Association of Canada is proud that it and its predecessor the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association played an active and indeed a decisive role in this achievement.

REGENT PARK HOUSING PROJECT (NORTH) PLAN UNDER THE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF TORONTO.

On January 1, 1947, after a great deal of preliminary investigation, the City Council submitted the question of redeveloping a sub-standard housing area, known as Regent Park (north), to the ratepayers qualified to vote on money by-laws. The vote favored such redevelopment by 62.2% to 37.8%.

THE AUTHORITY

City Council thereupon applied to the Legislature of the Province of Ontario for special legislation (Royal Assent given April 1, 1947) to appoint The Housing Authority of Toronto, being a public Commission and a body politic and corporate, consisting of not less than three nor more than five members, resident ratepayers, the majority not to be members of City Council.

By-law No. 16933, passed by City Council on May 12, 1947, established the Authority and entrusted to it the construction, maintenance, control, operation and management of the Regent Park Housing Project (north) Plan, while By-law No. 17046, passed September 29, 1947, extended its functions by authorizing it, in the name and on behalf of the Corporation of the City of Toronto, to buy, acquire, sell, convey or otherwise deal with the lands expropriated as the site by By-law No. 16997, passed July 15, 1947, and also to settle and pay claims for damages or compensation arising out of such expropriation.

THE SITE

The site is composed of six major city blocks located approximately one and one-half miles from City Hall. It is bounded by Dundas Street East on the south and Gerrard Street East on the north, between Parliament Street on the west and River Street on the east and contains 42.5 acres. Oak Street, running east and west, and Sackville and Sumach Streets, running north and south, intersect the property, which is also interlaced by alley thoroughfares. Most of the houses are very old, many of them being of frame or rough-cast construction, and sub-standard housing is the rule rather than the exception. Large families or two or more families in a house add to the congestion. The redevelopment plans provide that there shall be no through streets, which is a safety factor, as well as providing more park area.

The Dominion Government, in agreeing to pay one half of the cost of acquiring and clearing the site up to a maximum of $1,150,000 (the estimated cost being placed at $2,300,000), requested City Council to provide that the Authority would construct and operate the project in accordance with section 9 of the National Housing Act, 1944, and charge rents which would not exceed the cost of operating the project and amortizing the debt at 3% per annum over a period of fifty years, and Council so provided by By-law No. 17319, passed June 28, 1948.

The balance of the cost will be provided by the City of Toronto, the annual amount if amortized in fifty years being $44,689, but it is expected that the present cost of civic services will be materially reduced by reason of improved conditions and approximately ten acres of sorely needed park area will be available, not only to the residents of the project area but also to the whole of this congested district.

REDEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to develop the area with twenty 48 or 54-suite apartment buildings and nine 8-family group houses, which will provide 1,056 housing units, as follows:

4 buildings - each with -	24	6-room units -	96 units
	12	4-room units -	48 units
	18	3-room units -	72 units
16 buildings - each with -	24	4-room units -	384 units
	24	5-room units -	384 units
9 buildings - each with -	4	6-room units -	36 units
	4	7-room units -	36 units
Total			1,056 units

which will provide accommodation as follows:

2 person families	-	3-room units -	72 families
3 or 4 person families	-	4-room units -	432 families
5 or 6 person families	-	5-room units -	384 families
7 or 8 person families	-	6-room units -	132 families
9 or 10 person families	-	7-room units -	36 families
Total			1,056 families

The estimated cost, including a Community Centre to be used also as Project Offices, is $9,600,000 which, while greater than originally anticipated, will be offset by the increased capacity of the residents to pay rent and should result in a lower annual deficit than was at first expected. Apart from this, the 822 families now residing in the 662 houses in the area will be re-housed in modern, sanitary units, such residents having been assured of the opportunity to remain, and 234 additional families will ultimately be provided with urgently required moderate-rental housing accommodation.

RENTS AND OPERATING DEFICITS

In 1947, as part of the Toronto Metropolitan Housing Research Project, Mr. Humphrey Carver and Mrs. Alison L. Hopwood prepared a Report "A Rent Scale for the Regent Park Housing Project". The average rent payable under their proposed scale would be $28.68 a month but a re-survey of the section where redevelopment has commenced was made by Mr. E. Stewart Bishop of the Toronto Department of Public Welfare, his study revealing that the rent-paying capacity of the residents had increased to $37.48 a month, or, excluding those in the higher income brackets, to $32.47 a month.

These amounts are, of course, shelter rents. As heating, water and hot water, refrigeration, etc., (costs which are usually paid directly by tenants of houses) are to be supplied by the Authority, a monthly service charge ranging downward from $13.00 will apply. The average monthly charge for shelter rent and services was then found to be $47.10, or, again excluding those with the higher incomes, $42.05.

(SEE NOTE ON PAGE 4)

The estimated monthly cost per unit is $52.50 and, as it is the ultimate goal of the Authority to provide accommodation only to those in the income group averaging from $150.00 to $175.00 a month (see Carver-Hopwood principle for variations according to family size), the average charge of $42.05 was used in arriving at an annual deficit of $132,422, being $10.45 a month per unit.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION

Purely as an experimental measure, the Provincial Government, under the provisions of the Housing Development Act, 1948, made a grant of $56,000 to the Authority, being at the rate of $1,000 a unit for the 56 units presently under construction.

In itself, this would have practically no effect on the annual deficit but, should the Province decide that the experiment is successful and continue to make a like grant toward the cost of construction as other units are erected, the ultimate result would be a reduction in the deficit to $91,396 per annum. Such a grant would practically equal that of the Dominion Government.

The starting rent scale provides that a family of two with an income of $100.00 a month will be required to pay $20.00 for shelter rent and $9.00 for services, a total monthly rent of $29.00. A family of ten with an income of $300.00 a month will also pay 20% of its income or $60.00 for shelter rent, plus $13.00 for the services, a total of $73.00 a month.

Comparatively few of the resident families are in the higher income brackets and, were it not for the priority promises to the families which resided in the area on July 15, 1947, the date of expropriation, they would not be considered eligible for re-housing. Even though the rents payable by those with the higher incomes are in excess of the estimated average monthly cost per unit, they are still below the rents they would be required to pay for similar accommodation elsewhere. It is not the intention, nor would the Authority be justified, to subsidize them in any way; subsidies must be limited to those unfortunate enough to need them.

PROBLEMS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

This is the first project in Canada for the redevelopment of a congested sub-standard housing area and, by reason of the acute housing situation existing to-day, it presents problems not ordinarily encountered in a building programme.

Except for areas in the centre of the blocks, which must be retained for the "breathing spaces" so urgently required, little vacant land was available. One block at the north-east corner of Dundas Street East and Sumach Street provided a site for an 8-family group house building, which has now been completed and will be fully occupied before April 1, 1949.

Just south of Gerrard Street East, about midway between Sumach and River Streets, a site for a 48-suite apartment building was obtained, without moving any families, by demolishing a public garage, a workshop, and the rear part of a store and dwelling building. This apartment building, which will be completed in a few months, was constructed almost at the rear entrances of the Gerrard Street East houses but, notwithstanding the inconvenience to which they have been exposed, no complaint has been registered by these families. They realize there is no other way for the reconstruction programme to be established and have been very co-operative.

Tenders have now been invited for the construction of a 54-suite apartment building and another 8-family group-house building, which will be located on the west side of River Street between Oak Street and Gerrard Street East, the closing date being April 8. While this site will require the demolition of ten houses, a small factory and a tavern, the resident families will all be accommodated elsewhere. The larger families will be established in the new building, which contains four 6-room and four 7-room houses, while the smaller families will be re-housed temporarily in the quarters vacated by other families selected for the group-house building.

Those tendering for these contracts are also requested to submit proposals for the completion of the programme in the easterly section (the two blocks from Dundas Street East to Gerrard Street East between Sumach and River Streets) and for the balance of the project, as it is considered that a worth-while saving would result, if a contractor were assured of a continuity of work over the next few years.

The programme for the progressive development of the easterly section provides for construction to commence on three more 48-suite apartment buildings immediately after the one on Gerrard Street East has been completed. One will be located on Dundas Street East and two on the east side of Sumach Street and, while thirty-nine old buildings will have to be demolished to clear the sites, the accommodation in the Gerrard Street building will be sufficient to offset these demolitions.

In the early part of 1950, we shall be in a position to start construction of the remaining 48-suite apartment building (on River Street, south of Oak Street) and the two 8-family group-house buildings (one at Dundas East and River Streets, the other at Gerrard East and Sumach Streets), thus completing the easterly section of the Project in so far as new construction is concerned.

About the same time, because of new construction having provided more housing units than will be required to re-house the displaced families, we shall be able to commence demolition and reconstruction in the centre section, that is, the two blocks between Dundas Street East and Gerrard Street East from Sackville to Sumach Streets.

From now on, redevelopment construction should proceed at a much more rapid pace than has heretofore been possible but, by reason of the difficulties outlined, it is apparent that we still will be unable to proceed as quickly as would have been the case had the whole of the area been available as a cleared building site.

Toronto, March 23, 1948.

NOTE from Page 2 - The estimated monthly cost per unit of $52.50 is based on units of all sizes from three to seven rooms, the average for the larger units naturally being higher. Furthermore, it is based on the tax levy for the completed project being fixed at an amount of $36,100.00, which was the total levied on the taxable land and building assessment for 1948 taxes, and nothing has been included for the cost of acquiring the site, which is being shared equally by the Dominion Government and the City of Toronto.